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ABSTRACT

The relationship between the student teaching experience and attitude changes was investigated. Twenty-six student teachers and 41 control-group students responded to a Teaching Attitude Questionnaire both before and after field experience. This questionnaire assessed attitudes toward teaching, levels of anxiety, and imagined feelings as a teacher. An analysis of the resulting data is presented. Findings indicated that, while student teachers become more professionally confident, they do so through developing styles of teaching that tend to be more self-concealing, restrictive, and custodial. A copy of the questionnaire used in the study is appended. (Author/JD)

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EMERGING PROFESSIONAL IDENTITIES: ATTITUDE CHANGES OF SECONDARY EDUCATION STUDENT TEACHERS

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Abstract

This study investigated the relationship between the student teaching experience and attitude changes. On a pre-posttest basis, 26 student teachers and 41 control-group students responded to a Teaching Attitude Questionnaire which assessed attitudes toward teaching, levels of anxiety, and imagined feelings as a teacher.

A crosstabulation analysis of data revealed several significant attitude changes among the student teachers. A discriminant analysis identified three functions which significantly distinguish between post-test respondents who have student taught and those who have not.

Findings indicate that, while student teachers become more professionally confident, they do so through developing styles of teaching that tend to be more self-concealing, restrictive, and custodial.

Introduction

Student teaching is commonly viewed, among students, educators, and laymen, as an essential component in the preparation of teachers. However, the actual effect of the student teaching experience, beyond providing the student with the opportunity to "feel" what it is like "to teach," is not universally agreed upon. Several researchers (Weinstock and Peccolo, 1970; Hoy, 1967; Dutton, 1962; Day, 1959; Muuss, 1969), for example, indicate that student teachers' attitudes toward students and teaching become negative after student teaching. Other researchers (Jacobs, 1968; Scott and Brinkley, 1960; Horowitz, 1968; Sandgren and Schmidt, 1956) present evidence suggesting that student teachers' attitudes generally become more positive as a result of practice teaching. And finally, Campbell (1967) points out that student teaching may have no significant effect on the attitudes of teachers in preparation.

The purpose of this study, then, was to investigate the relationship between the student teaching experience and changes in attitude (if, indeed, any exist) among secondary education teacher trainees at Southwest Texas State University during the Spring 1979 semester.

Specifically, the study sought to examine certain attitudes held by student teachers before and after their student teaching experience in an effort to answer the following four major questions:

1. Do perceptions of the self in the role of the teacher tend to change?
2. Does the student teacher's understanding of the educative process and how educational theory relates to practice change in any fundamental way?
3. Do changes occur in the "model" or "style" of teaching that teacher trainees identify with?
4. In regard to each of the preceding three attitudinal dimensions, in what direction do changes, if any, tend to occur?

Subjects and Procedure

Subjects included a group of 26 students (Group I) who completed an eight-week student teaching experience and a control group of 41 junior and senior secondary education students (Group II) who did not student teach during this period.

On a pretest and posttest basis, the 67 subjects were given an author-developed Teaching Attitude Questionnaire (TAQ). The TAQ (see Appendix) is an instrument designed to measure the attitudes of students toward themselves and toward certain dimensions of professional practice. The questionnaire presents a variety of items--some require self assessment in the future role of teacher; others request an indication of subjective, imagined feelings as a teacher. By collecting data for a wide variety of items, the study additionally sought to explore measurement techniques which might yield more conclusive results than those found through the typical comparison of pre- and post-student teaching scores on the Minnesota Teacher Attitude Inventory, (of the preceding research cited, only Jacobs [1968] and Hoy [1967] do not use the MTAI).

The 38 items on the TAQ are divided into the following three major categories (included for each category are standard alpha reliability coefficients obtained on the pretest for Groups I and II combined): attitudes toward various dimensions of professional practice and the role of the teacher (r=.68), self appraised degrees of anxiety and levels of competence (r=.63), and imagined feelings as a teacher (r=.31).

The section of the TAQ which asked respondents to select a teacher description most characteristic of the kind of teacher each subject imagined he would become is taken from Thelen's (1967, pp. 210-211) descriptions of various teaching styles. Thelen summarizes these teacher

types in terms of the following key concepts, ordered according to their presentation in the questionnaire (see Appendix for the complete descriptions):

Subject Expert
Planning
Rules
Independent Self Starting
Buddy
Traditional Professional

The final section of the TAQ is adapted from Wright and Tuska's (1966) study of 972 female student and first year teachers' attitudes toward self and others. Here, respondents were asked to imagine how they might feel as teachers. Twenty-one pairs of bipolar adjectives, scaled from 1-6, were presented to subjects who circled the number corresponding to the imagined direction and intensity of their feelings. For each adjective-pair, subjects were instructed to decide first which side of the pair was most appropriate; then, how much they felt they would be that way as a teacher. By varying the side of the page on which the more attractive pole was placed, the tendency for a respondent to use one side of the page more than the other regardless of content was minimized.

A crosstabulation of the data from Groups I and II was computed to obtain frequencies, percentages, and chi-square coefficients for analyses of pretest, posttest, and pre-posttest differences.

Also, a multi-variate approach was used, and discriminant functions distinguishing the "best" set of TAQ items which might optimally "predict" membership in either Group I or Group II were identified.

Results of the Study

Findings revealed that the student teachers, when compared to the control group, had significantly different pre-to-post attitude changes for five of the 38 TAQ items. As a group, student teachers tended to shift toward valuing greater "formal structure" (as opposed to "informal

spontaniety") in their teaching style ($p<.05$). Similarly, student teachers came to value "systematic, structured" (rather than "spontaneous, loose") methods ($p<.05$). After student teaching, Group I students also tended to place more emphasis on attaining objectives related to "subject matter" rather than to "students' personal growth" ($p<.0005$). In terms of the anxiety they have about their future effectiveness as full-time teachers, the student teachers reflected markedly less anxiety than the control group ($p<.001$). Finally, the student teachers revealed a shift toward becoming more "forceful" (rather than "retiring") in their style of teaching ($p<.05$).

Through the discriminant analysis of each of the three categories of the TAQ, three subsets of items were found which significantly distinguished among pre- and post-respondents. First, the analysis of the TAQ section dealing with attitudes toward various dimensions of professional practice identified three items which tend to "predict" pre- and post-membership in either Group I or II. Post-test student teachers can be "identified" by their greater preference for the "firm treatment of pupils," their greater emphasis on reaching objectives related to "subject matter," and their tendency to view teachers as "leaders" and students as "followers," (Wilks' Lambda, .88; $p<.05$).

Second, the discriminant analysis of the TAQ section dealing with self-appraised degrees of anxiety and levels of competence indicates that post-test student teachers can be identified by their stronger belief that they will be "successful" as full-time teachers and their tendency to rate higher their aptitude and ability for teaching as compared to other secondary education students at Southwest Texas State University, (Wilks' Lambda, .79; $p<.0005$).

Third, the analysis of the TAQ section dealing with imagined feelings as a teacher showed that post-test student teachers, as they imagine themselves in the role of the full-time teacher, tend to see themselves as more "elegant," "reserved," "blurry," and "strong," (Wilks' Lambda, .66; $p<.000$).

These changes in attitude counter the attitude changes reported by Wright and Tuska (1966, pp. 186-87) in their sample of women teachers:

> Before practice teaching role appears to have everything to offer self. Role is significantly more confident, active, perceptive, happy, and obedient for all prospective teachers. But practice teaching takes its toll on these opportunities for self improvement through role assumption. Confidence and perceptiveness drop significantly . . . . In addition, happiness drops significantly for the high school and middle school women . . . .

In reporting their "imagined feelings as a full-time teacher" by rating 21 bipolar adjectives on a six-point Likert scale, Group I respondents revealed several feelings which differ significantly from those reported by Group II students. At the end of their field experience, Group I students tended to associate the following traits with their teaching style: "cool" (as opposed to "warm"), $p < .05$; "sharp" (as opposed to "blurry"), $p < .05$; "tight" (as opposed to "loose"), $p < .05$; and "forceful" (as opposed to "retiring"), $p < .05$.

Discussion

Overall, the pattern of attitudinal changes among student teachers seems to suggest that, while the field experience does cause students to become more confident and less anxious about future professional effectiveness, it does encourage them to value styles of teaching which are less "student-centered" and more self-concealing, restrictive, and custodial than those valued before the field experience. These findings indicate, then, that student teaching, as it is presently conceived and practiced in many of our teacher education programs, may need to be reevaluated in an attempt to formulate new approaches which will encourage

students to develop teaching styles that are more "open," "emergent," and "humane."

This inquiry has also suggested the need for the design and execution of additional studies of the relationship between the student teaching experience and changes in attitude. Further inquiry could seek answers to the following questions: Are certain personality types likely to experience positive attitude changes as a result of student teaching, while others experience negative changes? What attitudes toward self and teaching are influenced by the student's membership in the university community and which attitudes are influenced by contact with personnel in the public schools? And finally, are there intervention strategies through which supervisors can minimize, or preclude entirely, the emergence of negative attitudes?

APPENDIX

Name _____

TEACHING ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE M____ F____

The following survey is designed to help me determine the attitudes secondary education students have toward certain dimensions of teaching. Your responses will be kept in the strictest confidence. When the data is analyzed your questionnaire will be identified by a computer code number, thus assuring complete anonymity. Your name is required so that I may contact students who do not complete the questionnaire or do not understand the directions.

I thank you for your help.

Dr. Forrest W. Parkay
Education Department

Have you taught before? _____ yes _____ no If so, how many years? _____

Where did you teach? _____

What is your first teaching area? _____

Second teaching area? _____

SECTION I

1. Read the following dimensions of teacher activity and then place an X by the one that you feel is most important in teaching, and then a O by the one that you feel is least important.

____ Planning and preparing lessons.
____ Developing competency in classroom management techniques.
____ Developing competency in various teaching tasks or skills.
____ Developing educative relationships with students.
____ Maintaining involvement in professional organizations.
____ Developing a deeper theoretical understanding of the educative process.
____ Developing more competency in evaluating students.

2. In order to improve your teaching ability, which of the following areas do you feel would be most important to pursue? Place an X by the one area you feel would be most beneficial and a O by the one area you feel would be least beneficial.

____ Additional courses in your subject area.
____ Additional courses in education.
____ Help of a distinctly personal sort, such as group or individual therapy.
____ Additional teaching experience.
____ Reading of professional literature.
____ Seminars and special courses in which one could discuss personal and emotional aspects of the teacher's work.
____ Inservice education in the school setting.

On the following pairs of bipolar characteristics, circle the number which you feel indicates the approximate emphasis an "ideal" teacher tries to give each pair of characteristics.

3. 1 2 3 4 5 6

formal structure	informal spontaniety

4. 1 2 3 4 5 6

views teachers as leaders and students as followers	views teachers and students as mutually and equally involved in learning

5. 1 2 3 4 5 6

dominance ard leading	guiding and passive observation

6. 1 2 3 4 5 6

firm treatment of pupils	permissive treatment of pupils

7. 1 2 3 4 5 6

systematic, structured classroom procedures	loosely structured, spontaneous classroom procedures

8. 1 2 3 4 5 6

emphasis on subject matter objectives	emphasis on students' personal growth

9. 1 2 3 4 5 6

"traditional" view of education	"liberal" view of education

10. In this section, several teacher "types" are given. Read each one and then place an X by the one paragraph that you feel most characterizes the kind of teacher you will be. Place a O by the one paragraph that is least like the teacher you will be.

_____ This teacher really knows his subject. He keeps informed on the new ideas in his field. He likes to have students know about these things and he brings new ideas and information into his course. He spends extra time with students who show a particular interest in his subject.

_____ This teacher plans learning activities with the students. He takes time to get suggestions from the students and tries to help them work out a plan with which they are all satisfied. He allows students a good deal of freedom in choosing people with whom to work and in deciding on what topics they will work with in the plan.

_____ This teacher makes sure that rules are clear from the start so that students will know what is expected of them. He reminds the students of the rules when he thinks they have forgotten them. He tries to help the students become aware of the necessity of meeting requirements.

_____ This teacher expects students to work independently and to take responsibility for seeing tasks through to the finish. He tries to challenge them to tackle problems that call for imagination and resourcefulness. He encourages students to search for possible solutions on their own and to try out ideas that seem worthwhile to them.

_____ This teacher wants students to feel that he can be one of them. He knows a lot about what young people like to do. He plans the work of the class around these things and enjoys discussing them in class.

_____ This teacher makes use of a variety of materials and activities which he has worked out and tested in previous classes. He plans the work that the students are to do and tries to make it interesting to them. He expects them to be successful in their work and is interested to know how much they have gotten from it when it is finished.

SECTION II

11. I would rate the anxiety I have about my future effectiveness in my first full-time teaching assignment as

no anxiety	below "average"	"average"	moderate	considerable

12. I imagine that my first year of full-time teaching will be

very satisfying	moderately satisfying	about even between satisfaction & dissatisfaction	rather dissatisfying	frustrating, dissatisfying

13. When I begin full-time teaching, I feel I will be

very successful	moderately successful	neither successful nor unsuccessful	rather unsuccessful	mostly unsuccessful

14. How would you rate your aptitude and ability for teaching compared with that of other secondary education students at Southwest Texas State University?

Superior _____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor _____

15. How would you rate your aptitude and ability for teaching compared with your concept of the "ideal" teacher?

Superior ____ Excellent ____ Good ____ Fair ____ Poor ____

SECTION III

This section asks you to imagine how you will be, or feel, as a full-time teacher. For each pair of opposite words, first, decide which side of the pair is most appropriate; second, how much you feel you will be that way. Circle the appropriate number. Respond to each item and remember that there are no "right" answers.

16. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Warm Cool

17. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Ordinary Elegant

18. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Mean Kind

19. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Responsive Reserved

20. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Sad Happy

21. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Neat Sloppy

22. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Shifting Sure

23. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Sharp Blurry

24. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Loose Tight

25. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Soft Hard

26. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Forceful Retiring

27. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Clean Dirty

28. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Plain Fancy

29. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Weak Strong

30. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Loud Quiet

31. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Deep Shallow

32. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Strange Familiar

33. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Bright Dull

34. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Bad Good

35. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Active Passive

36. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Vague Clear

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